

# SightNews

Newsletter 119

Spring 2008

Sightnews is the newsletter of the Hertfordshire Society for the Blind

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#### Office hours:

10am to 4pm Mon to Thurs

#### Resource Centre: by appointment

10am to 3pm Mon to Thurs

## CEO's Patch



Hello again everyone and welcome to our Spring Newsletter. I hope you all had a good Christmas and New Year. The Society has started the year busier than ever and we are hurtling through February as I write.

This edition includes an update on the recommendations by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) on drugs to treat Wet Age-related Macular Degeneration.

HSB will be saying goodbye to two of its team members this June. Both Patricia Steeden (Tricia) and Lorna Whitaker will be taking well earned retirements.

Tricia has been with us for thirteen years and is the longest serving member of the team. Tricia has predominately been a Welfare visitor for the West of the county, however over the years she has carried out many different tasks for the Society. Tricia's ongoing commitment and in-depth knowledge has been of huge value and we will find it extremely difficult to replace her. Good news is Tricia will not be leaving us completely as she will volunteer for the Society in West Herts. She can't get away that easily.

Lorna has been with HSB for the past five years and was responsible for establishing the very successful Equipment and Information Outreach service. Lorna's flexibility and determination in achieving this is commendable and her hard work played a significant part in this service attracting Big Lottery funding. We will miss Lorna and, again, replacing her will be a tough task. Unfortunately we will be losing Lorna completely as she and her husband Allan will be moving to another part of the country to be nearer to their sons.

I must give my appreciation to Allan Whitaker for all his help as a volunteer over the years, particularly with producing the tapes for this newsletter. Many thanks Allan.

I would like to say on behalf of the Society and myself how much we have appreciated all Lorna's and Tricia's hard work over the years and how much the team will miss them both.

This year we are holding a Charity Cricket match as our centre piece fund raising event. This will be on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> August at Haileybury College which is situated in Hertford Heath. Although details are minimal at present, we will probably have a short match between HSB and a charity called Viewpoint, who will co-host the day. We will then have the main match which will hopefully be between a club side and a celebrity/ ex players team.

There will be a marquee for afternoon teas and a BBQ. We will hold a raffle and an auction of promises. Haileybury College is a perfect setting for an afternoon's cricket on a summer's day. More details will be made available nearer the time. However, if you are interested in attending please let us know and we can contact you once we have more information.

That's all from me for now. I do hope you all have a good spring time and I will speak to you again in the summer. Goodbye for now – Tony.

## **Equipment and Information Outreach Service:**

The Equipment and Information Outreach Service funded by the Big Lottery goes from strength to strength. We should be ahead of target when later this year we create our eighth Sight Information Point.

### **Bernie's Patch**

This Spring we can report great news - the seventh Sight Information Point will be up and running in Cheshunt from Tuesday 25th March. Open from 10.30am to 12.30pm it will be held in the Garden Room of Wolsey Hall, Cheshunt (next to the pond) and will run thereafter on the 4th Tuesday of every month. As with all our information points, there will be a good range of equipment to help with everyday tasks. If you would like to view a specific item, please let us know and we will try to bring this along.

Other regular Information Points on the west of the County are -

### **Hemel Hempstead Sight Information Point**

1st Tuesday 10am - 12pm  
Hemel Hempstead Social Centre for the Blind, Boxmoor.

### **St Albans Sight Information Point**

2nd Monday 10am - 12pm  
Jubilee Centre, St Albans

### **Watford Sight Information Point**

3rd Monday 11am - 1pm  
Cross Street Social Centre for the Blind, Watford.

### **Special Sight Awareness Events**

#### **20<sup>th</sup> May 2008 10am to 2pm**

We will be running a Low Vision event in partnership with Hertfordshire Library Service at Potters Bar Library, High Street Potters Bar EN6 5BZ

Call in to browse among:-

Portable and desktop electronic magnifiers for easier reading and writing

'Supernova' computer software with magnification

Talking and large print books

Lighting, clocks, watches, telephones, kitchen aids and memo recorders to help with everyday tasks, for leisure or at work.

#### **Wednesday 25 June 10am to 2pm**

Low Vision Exhibition with Herts. Hearing Advisory Service at Marford Hall, Wheathampstead.

Suppliers of Low Vision Equipment will be demonstrating the latest equipment. Local support groups will be on hand as well as the Hearing Advisory Service who will demonstrate hearing technology and give advice on hearing impairment.

## **Lorna's Patch**

Regular Sight Information Points in the east of the County are:

### **Ware Road Sight Information Point**

4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday 10am to 12pm  
Ware Road Day Service Unit,  
Ware Road, Hertford

### **Stevenage Sight Information Point**

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday 10am to 12pm  
Stevenage Resource Centre,  
Chells Way, Stevenage (next to  
Glebe Precinct)

### **Hitchin Sight Information Point**

2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday 10am to 12pm  
Nightingale Day Centre,  
Nightingale Road, Hitchin (near  
Police Station)

## **Special Sight Awareness Events**

### **Village's Hearing and Sight Event**

Tuesday 29 April at Northfields  
Sheltered Housing Scheme, off  
South Road, Puckeridge. 10.30am  
to 2.30pm

Call in to pick up information and try out equipment to help with everyday tasks and meet representatives from:

- Herts. Society for the Blind
- Herts. Hearing Advisory Service
- Adult Care Services Sensory Team.

## **Jim McDonald Centre Low Vision Event**

Tuesday 27 May 2008 10am to 2pm  
at Jim McDonald Centre, McDonald  
Court, High View, Hatfield

Call in to pick up information and try out equipment to help with everyday tasks at home, at leisure or when out and about.

All these Sight Information Points and Low Vision Exhibitions are of great importance to HSB because it allows us to support people within their locality, which is vital because transport is such an issue for people who have a Visual Impairment.

Also the Low Vision Equipment that we demonstrate will hopefully lead to people retaining some of their independence within their homes, which is important to all of us.

## **Tape Recorders, CDs and MP3 players**

Many enquiries at our SIPs are about updating from cassette players to CD or MP3 players. Initially some formats would work with one but not others. Now all the Daisy Players from RNIB will take both CDs and MP3s. To try out the 'Plextalk' Daisy player or a Sony Portable MP3-CD player recommended by Calibre Books, ring Bernie or Lorna on 01992-588145 and they will bring them out to your nearest SIP.

## **Big Button Mobile Phones**

For those of you who live in North Herts. Hagger in Letchworth have three big button mobile phones in their showroom. The 'Emporia' at £145.00, Easy 5 at £99.99 and the 'Easy Use' in black or silver at £139.00 are all available. Stuart and Lee are constantly keeping themselves up to date as new phones come onto the market and are happy to set up your personal settings. They also sell the Sony MP3-CD player at £29.99. Hagger's telephone number is 01462-677331.

## **Products & Suppliers**

### Professional Vision Services

PVS is a local company with a full range of CCTVs and computer solutions. We offer a personal, professional service in your own home and we are a full member of BHTA. Tel: 01462-420751  
Fax: 01462-420185 or email [sales@professional-vision-services.co.uk](mailto:sales@professional-vision-services.co.uk)

We are holding an Open Day on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April between 10am and 3pm at our office in Wellbury House, 90 Walsworth Road, Hitchin SG4 9SX. Come along to test a CCTV and have a friendly cup of tea or coffee.

## **NICE Drugs Announcement**

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has made its long awaited announcement on drugs to treat Wet Age-related Macular Degeneration.

The good news is that NICE have changed their original recommendations and are now going to recommend treating the first eye to come to clinical attention. This is a vast improvement on their original recommendation to only treat the second eye to be affected and allow the first eye to deteriorate.

Commenting on the recent consultation of their original recommendations NICE said " Our independent advisory committee considered all the responses we received, and in particular identified two key issues. Firstly, that allowing the first eye to deteriorate would cause anxiety and depression, and secondly, that treating only the second eye could mean losing the chance to preserve vision if it was affected by untreatable vision loss or didn't respond to treatment"

The other key area covered by the new recommendations is in relation to the drugs used for the treatment of Wet Age-related Macular Degeneration.

Ranibizumab (Lucentis), is recommended if a set of circumstances apply in the eye to be treated.

Pegaptanib (Macugen) is not recommended for the treatment of Wet Age-related Macular Degeneration. However, anyone currently receiving Pegaptanib (Macugen) for any lesion type, should have the option to continue therapy until they and their clinicians consider it appropriate to stop.

NICE are also saying that because these recommendations are significantly different they think it is important to hold a second consultation before they finalise the guidance. The new consultation has now closed as of the 14<sup>th</sup> January 2008. The second appraisal committee meeting will take place on the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

At the time of writing this newsletter, the results of the second appraisal committee meeting were not yet available. HSB will give updates as information becomes available.

### **Thought for the Day:**

Tomorrow is today's greatest labour-saving device.

### **The Volunteers' Option**

Yok-Lan Parker (known to the Society as Eve) has offered to crochet shawls for sale to raise money for the Society. However, she needs wool to actually create the shawls, each of which needs 300 grams of double knit wool. Does anyone out there have spare double knit wool to donate to Eve? If you do, please let us know so that we can arrange for it to reach her. If anyone wants to order a shawl from Eve her number is 01992-466751.

### **Club Corner**

We have news from five clubs this newsletter.

Alan Osborn of Letchworth and District Blind Club writes:

"We are in desperate need for some new blood in our club. We are down to 9 members which reduces the possibilities of entertainment and makes the cost of outings prohibitive. Our average age is 85 as the eldest is 95 and the youngest around 60. The club is a social lifeline for our members so we keep going as best we can. We still meet at Freeman House, Radburn Way, Letchworth GC on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month (except for June July and August)

at 7.30pm for 2 hours. Membership is £5 pa with no additional monthly costs even though transport is arranged from and back to members' homes “.

Alan has done an amazing job of running the club for many years and it would be a shame if it faltered through lack of members or help for Alan. His phone number is 01462-480221 or he can be contacted by email on [alanosborn@ntlworld.com](mailto:alanosborn@ntlworld.com).

Susan Harper of the Watford Club writes:

“The Watford Club has a full and varied programme arranged for 2008, including outings most months in the summer and three holidays already booked. At the Wednesday meeting we now have the services of a chiropodist and a manicurist. There are some vacancies on the free computer course on a Thursday morning. The Monday Keep-fit class is well attended and followed by a game of darts or scrabble. Great fun. Come along and make new friends and develop new interests. If you are interested please contact me, Susan Harper, on 01923-264689.”

Audrey Mackie of the Social Centre for the Blind in Boxmoor, Hemel Hempstead writes:

“The Social Centre for the Blind in Boxmoor is arranging a 7 day holiday at the Bradbury Hotel, near to Worthing and Brighton from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> August 2008. The Hotel

belongs to the Royal Society for the Blind and is designed for sight impaired people. There are bus outings and several evenings of entertainment. The cost of £339 with a deposit of £30 includes half board. Lunch snacks are available. All bedrooms are en-suite, many recently modernised. Free tea and coffee all day; Happy Hour 5-6pm. On-site hairdresser, manicurist and therapist for massage are available. We will travel by coach departing and returning to Hemel Hempstead Railway station. Cost of transport to follow when we know our numbers (estimated at £40).” Contact Audrey on 01442-217918 and she will send you an application form and brochure. Hurry as the Bradbury is a very popular hotel!

Doris Cutler of the 1066 Club in Berkhamsted is also looking for new members and helpers, and desperately needs a Club Secretary. They meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the month between 2.30pm and 4.20pm at the Berkhamsted Court House. If you feel you can match Doris's energy and verve please contact her on 01442-863793 or email her on [doris.cutler@virgin.net](mailto:doris.cutler@virgin.net)

The George Fuller Club also needs a new Secretary. They meet 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday monthly 7pm-9pm in Wormley. To offer, contact Doreen Crumly on 01354-741027

## Shop Window

### Items for Sale

HSB ex-demo:  
Telesensory Aladdin – Rainbow  
Colour CCTV. Sale £750.  
2 Compact Video Magnifiers £150  
each. 01992-588145

MLA Magnalink Colour CCTV.  
Good condition. 14 inch screen.  
Sale £350 ono. Contact Mr. Dixon  
on 020-7348-4344

Tieman Clearview Bright CCTV.  
3 yrs old, mint condition. New  
£2,300. Sale £600 ono. Contact  
Irfan Abrihim on 07739-074113.

Jordy II Reader with stand with  
moveable rest and head piece  
which can be read through. Cost:  
£2,885 Sale: £1,500 Contact: Mr.  
Stone on 01923-269430

Penguin Magnalink New: 2002  
Cost: £1,400 Sale £600. Contact:  
Maurice Jackson 01442-824000

Compact Video Magnifier: almost  
new and hardly used. Sale £150.  
Contact Sue at HSB 01992-  
588145 for details.

Two TVs have been offered free of  
charge. Their condition cannot be  
guaranteed or verified by the  
Society. Please contact Sue Lewis  
on 01992-588145 for details.

## Education Opportunities at Hertford Regional College

Chief Executive and Principal, Paul Harvey, has confirmed that the Visual Impairments Support Service will now swing into full operation and begin preparation for it's official public launch at the end of February.

The service is a result of a partnership between the LSC, HRC and the RNIB. Five other regions have also been chosen to develop College partnerships with the RNIB in a nationwide initiative to widen the participation of blind and partially sighted people in further education.

The service operates from the Ware Centre M206 which is the resource base run by RNIB Visual Impairments Co-ordinator Simon Doughty and Christine Giddings who is employed by the College. High quality support, advice and technology will be directly available to learners on both College sites and it is expected that this will foster the trust and confidence that students with sight problems need in order to achieve success. In turn this will encourage others to enrol who are not yet participating in FE.

The service will also be taking an holistic view of learning and will forge transitional links with outside

agencies, schools, HE and employers. As the partnership develops, the expertise gained will establish HRC as a centre of excellence in supporting visually impaired learners and will provide a platform for increasing participation in Colleges across the Region.

Technology is increasingly a vital component in all education and is an empowering factor for people with disabilities. The RNIB is providing specialist technology and will be working with the College to develop a more inclusive learning environment for all. A superb Merlin 17" LCD magnifier has already been placed in the Ware Campus Library and the resource base is building a stock of specialised hardware and software ready to assist Visually Impaired learners.

For further information contact [simon.doughty@rnib.org.uk](mailto:simon.doughty@rnib.org.uk) 01992-411830 [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

### **Safeguard Scheme with Three Valleys Water**

Three Valleys Water is calling all customers that may be in need of some extra care to register with its "Safeguard" scheme. More than 3,100 customers are already benefiting from a range of special care options which include:

- Large print or Braille bills for the visually impaired
- Minicom or typetalk for the hearing impaired
- A password scheme - where the customer provides a password for use if we should need to visit them
- Bottled water delivery in the event of a prolonged interruption of their water supply
- A register of dialysis patients
- Easy access to company sites
- An additional meter reading service

"All our customers deserve our highest level of service, but those such as the elderly and disabled often have special needs. People feel vulnerable if they don't know what to expect and our Safeguard scheme helps to alleviate some of this fear," said Graham Dainton-Smith, Special Care Services Co-ordinator.

"Our Safeguard register enables us to pinpoint where our Special Needs customers are located, thereby ensuring that they are looked after, particularly should any interruption to their supply occur," he added.

For further information please contact Graham Dainton-Smith on: Tel. 01707-277131, Fax: 01707-277104, website: [www.3valleys.co.uk](http://www.3valleys.co.uk)

## Focus on Fundraising

First of all, many thanks to everyone who supported the Society through donations or helping to raise money in 2007!

### **Supermarket Collections:**

We held collections in December at Tesco Stores in Royston and Baldock and raised nearly £900. By the time you read this we will have held a collection at Tesco Borehamwood. We have also arranged collections for 2008 at the following Tesco stores:

- Hertford Tesco: Sunday 20 April
- Bishop's Stortford Tesco Friday 20 June
- Watford Tesco: Friday 18 July
- Royston Tesco: Friday 15 August
- Stevenage Tesco: Thursday 2 October

We also plan to hold collections at other supermarket locations in 2008. As ever, we are always grateful for offers of help for these events, so if you are able to spare a little time to shake a tin, it will be much appreciated.

### **Grants**

We are pleased to say that we have recently received a number of grants to help us with various aspects of our work, in particular

with our home-visiting service and with developing training, both for our volunteers and other organisations.

### **Don't forget!**

The Society is always grateful to receive financial support to maintain and develop its services. This can be achieved in a number of ways:

#### A Gift in your Will

By remembering the Society in your Will, you can help current and future generations of visually impaired people. Remember, your gift does not have to be large; small gifts can also help to make a difference. If you are considering making a will, why not contact the office for our Will and Legacy Information Pack.

#### Donations

If you wish to make a donation, this can be done at any time you are able to afford to do so (we also have an on-line donation service through our website) or by regular contributions via Standing Order. It helps even further if you are able to Gift Aid your donation - it is always nice to get money back from the taxman!

Please contact us if you need any more information about supporting the Society.

## The Jubilee Sailing Trust

Jon Barber of the Jubilee Sailing Trust writes: Hello, the JST is aiming to raise the profile of the charity amongst organisations working with the blind and visually impaired. We have recently received a donation of funding, to help with the cost of voyages for visually impaired individuals, wishing to sail.

The JST is a unique charity set up to ensure that everyone can experience the thrill of offshore sailing regardless of physical ability. Our two tall ships STS Lord Nelson and SV Tenacious were purpose designed and built to facilitate people with every level of ability to fully engage in all activities aboard. 50% of the voyage crew may be physically disabled but 100% of the crew take part in every activity required to sail the ship. This includes sail handling, setting sails, helming, being part of a watch, mess duty, cleaning the ship and climbing the mast (which is optional!).

Contact Jon Barber, Customer Relationship Co-ordinator: Jubilee Sailing Trust, Hazel Road, Woolston, Southampton SO10 7GB. Tel: 023-8044-9138 Fax: 023-8044-9145 email sales@jst.org.uk or ww.jst.org.uk

## Why not become a 'Friend' of HSB?

We appreciate ongoing support for our activities and our Friends provide us not only with a regular source of income but also show us that they support the Society in its aim of maintaining and improving its services to people with a visual impairment. Our Friends are therefore very important to us and are a vital part of our organisation.

Your commitment involves making a minimum donation of £10 per year. If you want to join our Friends, please cut out and return the form below:

✂-----  
'Friends' Application Form

<b>Title:</b>	_____
<b>Name:</b>	_____
<b>Address:</b>	_____ _____ _____
<b>Postcode:</b>	_____
<b>Tel No:</b>	_____

**I enclose a cheque for £\_\_\_\_\_**  
(minimum £10) made payable to:  
Hertfordshire Society for the Blind.



Our first memory of Tricia Steeden was as she waved goodbye to the coach

taking her mother on an HSB group holiday many years ago, and we were delighted when, a few years later, Tricia joined the staff.

Both Tricia's parents were visually impaired, and the knowledge and understanding this gave her, along with her kindness and sense of humour, made her contribution to the Society's work invaluable. Tricia's dedication to her West Herts clients has been outstanding, and many of them now count her as a personal friend. She has always been prepared to 'go the extra mile' and has even been seen taking people to appointments at Moorfields on her days off.

Tricia's loyalties to her beloved Watford Football Club have never quite been understood by the boys in the office, resulting in much banter, but hopefully this season, she may well have more to cheer about! Whilst we will all miss her greatly, we do wish Tricia a well deserved, long and happy retirement that will also give her more time to enjoy her recently expanded group of grandchildren!



Some of us already knew Lorna Whitaker before she came to HSB as

we had worked closely with her during her time at Age Concern, and we felt very fortunate to have her join our team. Lorna brought with her her vast experience of working with volunteers, and this did indeed stand her in good stead for her work with the Equipment and Outreach Service. Lorna is hardworking and focused and has brought a calming influence to the team. She always takes time to listen and has managed to make her clients feel unhurried, which is not easy at a busy exhibition. Lorna has always been greatly supportive of her team of volunteers, who are sure to miss her too. Whilst we are very sorry to be losing her, we are all envious of her plans of an idyllic retirement in the country! We hope that she and Allan will be able to really enjoy having much more time to spend on their many hobbies, love of the outdoors and natural history.

### Contacting HSB:

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